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INEFFICIENT TEACHERS.

A FAIRLY correct classification of nearly every corps of teachers would show a few who are excellent, a large number who are good, and another small class who are inefficient. It is manifestly important that this last division should be reduced to the lowest possible limit in every system of schools. Theoretically, it is not difficult to do this, but as a practical problem it is one of the hardest to solve in school management. "It is much easier to keep them out than to get rid of them after they are in," is a well-known proverb among school superintendents. Notwithstanding this caution, there are probably but few cities that are not employing teachers who ought to be induced to go into other business. In a few instances this is owing to the infirmities of age. Sight, hearing, and amiability of temper have gradually, but surely, failed under the annoyances and petty, but wearing, cares of the schoolroom. It is not easy to determine what should be done in these cases. The children are entitled to the services of the best teachers that can be secured. The schools are not maintained to provide a support for the old or the infirm. Still, school officials will hesitate to discharge the teacher who has given long years of faithful and efficient service in their schools. If a pension could be offered, the difficulty would be removed. But there are few places where this will ever be a practical remedy. The idea of pensioning the teachers in the public schools is not generally received with patience by the taxpayers. Nor do the teachers look with favor upon the plan of requiring them to make an annual contribution to a fund which is to be used to support their aged fellow-workers.

After all, the disposition of the old members of a body of teachers will never present a very serious problem. They will always constitute a small percentage of the entire body.

How can we get rid of those who have evidently made a mistake in choosing their life-work? Some have not that power of

control which enables the successful teacher readily and easily to govern a large school of active children. It has been said that "children are not sent to school to be governed, but to be taught." This is true, but it is just as true that they cannot be taught in the ordinary school unless they are governed.

Another class of teachers are good instructors, but irritate parents and children by cutting words and fussy, petty rules and requirements. Then there are those who are deficient in teaching power. Everything is presented to the class without life and spirit, and dulness and stupidity are the prevailing characteristics of the school.

It would seem that it ought not to be difficult to make a change where it is clear that a teacher is not able to render efficient service. When satisfied of this fact, certainly a board of education will be anxious to secure someone who can give better satisfaction. Yet it is a fact that nothing is harder to bring about in a quiet and peaceful way than this very thing.

A few years ago the superintendent of one of the important cities of Illinois recommended to the board of education that three or four teachers be not continued for the coming year. The board adopted his report, and he left on his summer vacation. When he returned he found that all of them had been reappointed. He accepted an offered position in another city, where he is still discharging the duties of superintendent.

In another case it was recommended that about 3 per cent. of the force be discontinued. The report was accepted, and new teachers were appointed. During the vacation several teachers resigned for various personal reasons. When the question of filling these vacancies came before the board, it was found that, owing to persistent appeals and the use of influence, the poorest teacher of those dropped in the spring had been promised the first vacancy that might occur. To prevent injustice to the others, the superintendent suggested that all of those displaced be reinstated, and it was done by a unanimous vote of the board.

It would be unfair to the members of these boards to infer that they were dissatisfied with the recommendations of their superintendents, or that they desired to retain poor teachers in

their schools. The members simply lacked the requisite backbone to enable them to withstand the importunities of interested parties.

A gentleman who had presided over the educational affairs of a state and of two of the larger cities of the country gave his experience in these words: "Two subjects alone have given me trouble in school affairs—text-books and teachers. When I have attempted to remove either, unpleasant complications have generally arisen."

After an experience of more than forty years in this city, the writer is willing to advise young superintendents to touch these subjects gently.

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